

WHY DID JOHN WRITE HIS FIRST EPISTLE?

TEXT: I JOHN 1:1-10—2:2

Introduction:

1. The apostle John wrote five books.
2. Oftentimes soulwinners encourage lost sinners as well as new converts to read the Gospel of John.
3. Those interested in Bible prophecy study the book of Revelation.
4. And then there are John's three epistles.
5. All of John's books have the same emphasis – the deity of Christ.
6. Of all the apostles, John was the most intimate with the Lord (cf. John 19:26, 27). John knew our Lord better than any of the others.
7. And that is why John wrote this about Jesus – “This is the true God, and eternal life” (I John 5:20b).
8. One preacher described John's writings this way – “The Gospel of John is the deity of Jesus in life and death; the Epistle of John is the deity of Jesus in doctrine and experience; the Revelation of John is the unveiling of the deity of Jesus in eternal glory” (Roy L. Laurin).
9. This morning we will look at the first epistle of John, and I have entitled my message, “WHY DID JOHN WRITE HIS FIRST EPISTLE?”
10. Three times in I John, we are told why this epistle was written:
 - I. “These things write we unto you, **that your joy may be full**” (1:4).
 - II. “These things write I unto you, **that ye sin not**” (2:1).
 - III. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; **that ye may know that ye have eternal life**” (5:13).

I. THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL (1:4).

1. Worldly people may have “fun,” but only Christians know true joy. Fun comes from outside circumstances but joy comes from within.
2. The apostle Paul was joyful even when he was in prison (cf. Acts 16:25; Phil. 4:4).
3. First John 1:4 says, “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”
4. Our Lord said in John 15:11, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”
5. True Christianity is a religion of joy because it is one of fellowship with Christ (1:3).
6. One Christian defined joy as “the flag which is flown from the castle of the heart when the King is in residence there.”
7. When you have the joy of the Lord even your countenance changes. Many years ago the great missionary to Burma, Adoniram Judson, was home on furlough and passed through the city of Stonington, Connecticut. A young boy playing down at the wharf at the time of Judson’s arrival was struck by his appearance. Never before had he seen such a light on any human face. Many years later that boy became the well-known preacher, Henry Clay Trumbull. In his autobiography, he wrote a chapter entitled, “What a Boy Saw in the Face of Adoniram Judson,” explaining how Judson’s shining countenance changed his life.
8. They say it takes 72 muscles to frown and only 14 to smile!

II. THAT YE SIN NOT (2:1; cf. 3:8, 9; 5:18).

1. “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” (1:5). In other words, God is absolutely holy. God cannot look with favor upon any form of sin (cf. Hab. 1:13a; I Tim. 6:15, 16).

2. Therefore, to enjoy fellowship with God, we cannot walk in darkness (1:6).
3. On the other hand, if we walk in the light, than we can have fellowship with God and with one another (1:7).
4. We have victory over sin on the basis of Christ's shed blood (1:7). There was a "parliament of religions" over 100 years ago at the World's Fair and one by one each major world religion had their representative speak on how wonderful his religion was, how it benefited mankind, and so forth. Finally, it was time for the Christian to speak, a preacher from Boston named Cooke. He vividly described the blood on Lady Macbeth's hands, how she tried scrubbing and scrubbing and it wouldn't come off. He looked around the huge auditorium, and he looked at each speaker who had already spoken, and he asked: "Is there any one here tonight who can help her? What can remove this blood? Lady Macbeth is beside herself with guilt, the victim's blood is on her hands, and she can't wash it off. Can anyone here help her?" After considerable silence, the preacher, a Pastor Cooke, quoted I John 1:7 – "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7).
5. John says one of the conditions of fellowship with God is that we cannot walk in darkness (1:6; cf. John 3:19-21).
6. Darkness in the Bible represents sin – spiritual darkness is idolatry, unbelief, false religion, and doctrinal error. Moral darkness is sexual immorality, lying, stealing, drinking, drugs, and so forth.
7. According to the Bible, most people are in darkness (I John 5:19). Fellowshiping with God and walking in darkness are mutually exclusive experiences.
8. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

9. “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).
10. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light” (Eph. 5:8).
11. “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13).
12. First Peter 2:9 says God has “called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (I Peter 2:9).
13. One of God’s first acts in creation was separating the light from the darkness (Gen. 1:3, 4) because darkness and light cannot exist together at the same time (cf. II Cor. 6:14).
14. We need to get the Gospel light out to those in darkness – then they will get under conviction of sin and get saved. J. Vernon McGee gives a good illustration of this. He was out hunting when it started pouring so he ducked into a cave. It was pitch black in the cave but that didn’t bother him at all. But after about a half an hour he felt cold so he gathered together some leaves that were on the floor and started a fire. Then he noticed that there were lizards, snakes, and all sorts of unfriendly creatures crawling all over the place – so he ran out of there. The point is that he was quite comfortable in the cave until there was light – then his eyes were opened to the reality of the situation. Likewise, multitudes of people are comfortable in darkness because they never hear the Word of God but once they do, the Holy Spirit brings them under conviction.
15. Fellowship with God requires that we acknowledge the truth about ourselves. To deny that we are sinners means self-deception (1:8).
16. This has always been a big problem – it was a problem with the self-righteous Pharisees, it was a problem with the deluded Gnostics, and it is a problem today with many confused people today – religious and irreligious.

17. When people recognize sin for what it really is, then they can begin to respect God for who He really is. When people fail to see sin for what it is, they also fail to recognize the holiness of God.
18. Conversion does not mean the eradication of the sin nature. Rather, it means the implanting of the new, divine nature, with power to live victoriously over indwelling sin (1:7-9).
19. “For sin shall not have dominion over you” (Romans 6:14).
20. Fellowship with God involves keeping short accounts with God. It means confessing our sins and forsaking them (1:9).
21. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro. 28:13).
22. Our Lord told the impotent man He healed at the pool of Bethesda, “Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee” (John 5:14).
23. That is why our Lord told the woman taken in adultery, “Go, and sin no more” (John 8:11).
24. First, we see God’s perfect standard – “that ye sin not” (2:1) – sins of commission and sins of omission. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).
25. The Bible says, “Pray without ceasing” (I Thess. 5:17).
26. First Samuel 12:23 says, “Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you.”
27. Therefore, not praying is a sin of omission.
28. Because God is perfect, His standard for His people is absolute perfection. God cannot condone sin in the least degree, and so He sets perfection before us as the goal.
29. After God’s perfect standard, we see God’s perfect provision – “And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (2:1b).

30. First, God gives us His perfect standard, at the same time, God knows all about us and so He graciously made provision for us in the event of failure.

III. THAT YE MAY KNOW YE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE (5:13).

1. God wants us to know we have eternal life (John 3:16).
2. One of the most hotly debated doctrines is the doctrine of eternal security. I want to state that I believe in the eternal security of the genuine, born-again believer, but I do not believe in the security of the “make-believer.”
3. When a person is saved, he or she receives “eternal life” and that lasts for all eternity (cf. I John 5:12, 13).
4. John states in the clearest of terms that we can know that we have eternal life (5:13). The word “know” is a key word in this epistle – it is used 38 times.
5. John gives several proofs or evidences for eternal life.
 - Obedience (I John 2:3-6).
 - Love for the brethren (I John 3:14; 4:7-12).
 - The witness of the indwelling Holy Spirit (I John 3:24; 4:13; 5:8-10). Romans 8:16 says, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”
6. Those who do not believe in assurance of salvation are calling God a liar (I John 5:10).
7. First John 5:9 says that, “if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.” Every day we receive the witness of men – then why not receive the witness of God? Surely the witness of God is more reliable and trustworthy.

8. One of my favorite subjects is history – world history, US history, missionary history, etc. No one doubts great historical events even though they happened many years before we were born.
9. Yet we believe in these great historical events because of the witness of men. But “the witness of God is greater” (5:9).
10. Every day “we receive the witness of men.” Our society would shut down in one day if we did not receive the witness of men – our banking system, our political system, our court system, etc. – why not believe the witness of God, which is greater?

CONCLUSION:

1. Dr. Wilbur Chapman, the great evangelist, was led to Christ by another great evangelist, D L Moody.
2. When Moody called for an after-meeting Chapman was one of the first to enter the room, and to his great joy, DL Moody came and sat down beside him.
3. J Wilbur Chapman confessed that he was not quite sure that he was saved. Moody handed him his opened Bible and asked him to read John 5:24.
4. Trembling with emotion, Chapman read: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”
5. Moody then said to Chapman, “Do you believe this?” J Wilbur Chapman answered, “Certainly.”
6. Moody then asked, “Are you a Christian?” Chapman replied, “Sometimes I think I am, and again I am fearful.”
7. “Read it again,” Moody said. Then DL Moody repeated his two questions, and Chapman answered as he did before.

8. Then Moody inquired: “Whom are you doubting?” and then it all came to Chapman with startling suddenness.
9. “Read it again,” said DL Moody, and for the third time he asked: “Do you believe it?” Chapman said, “Yes, indeed I do.” “Well, are you a Christian?” and J Wilbur Chapman answered, “Yes, Mr. Moody, I am.”
10. From that day on, J Wilbur Chapman never questioned his acceptance with God.

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